



ORFORD STRING QUARTET

(QUARTET-IN-RESIDENCE)

ANDREW DAWES, *violin*

TERENCE HELMER, *viola*

KENNETH PERKINS, *violin*

MARCEL ST-CYR, *cello*

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 1976 AT 3 P.M.
WALTER HALL, EDWARD JOHNSON BUILDING

String Quartet, Op 80 in F minor

Mendelssohn

Allegro vivace assai

Allegro assai

Adagio

Finale: Allegro molto

The String Quartet, Op 80 is atypical in the works by Mendelssohn (1809-1847). Such popular earmarks of his style as the distinctive fairy music of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the rich lyricism of the *Song Without Words* are missing. In the F minor quartet the composer creates an exceptionally dark mood. The atmosphere of sombreness and restlessness is clearly autobiographical in that it reflects Mendelssohn's profound sorrow at the death of his beloved sister, Fanny, in May of 1847.

The persistence of the dominant emotional current in the quartet is realized through the similarity of the melodic ideas. For example, the anguished cries of the first violin in the opening movement are echoed throughout the work. Exact quotation of material can be found in the fourth movement where Mendelssohn employs brief passages from the *Scherzo*. Although Mendelssohn experimented with such linking of movements in his youth, the technique rarely appears in his mature works. The Op 80 suggests a move in a new direction which might have been further explored had he lived longer.

In the *Allegro vivace assai* and the *Finale*, Mendelssohn instills a sense of wild fury marked by unrestrained outbursts of sorrow. The driving motion characteristic of these movements is created in part through the extensive use of the string tremolo. The second movement, a *Scherzo*, remains in F minor. Here Mendelssohn's bitterness is evoked by a dependence on syncopation and chromatic harmonies. The feeling of foreboding which permeates this movement is intensified in the trio through the introduction of a bass ostinato. Although the *Adagio* moves to the major tonality it provides little relief from the pervading sadness of the quartet. Within the cycle of movements this beautiful elegy creates a moment of repose before the excitement of the *Finale*.

String Quartet No.3

Bartok

Prima parte: Moderato; attacca

Seconda parte: Allegro; attacca

Ricapitolazione della prima parte: Moderato

Coda: Allegro molto

Bela Bartok (1881-1945) is considered to be one of the most inventive and influential composers of the twentieth century. His six string quartets fill a rather important position in the history of the string quartet for they constitute the most original contribution to

the genre since the quartets by Beethoven. Within these works Bartok developed many of the ideas which are fundamental to the modern age of composition.

The Third Quartet, dating from 1927, is the shortest and most intense of the set. In this work Bartok continues to explore the potential of string instruments, thus the writing demands all the expertise of a professional ensemble. The inclusion of such techniques as slides and col legno passages exemplifies his attempt to expand the vocabulary of the instruments.

Although the Third Quartet was written as a single, continuous movement, it is clearly divided into four parts. The parts are thematically related in that the third part is a recapitulation of the first and the fourth is related to the second. Furthermore, in spite of the lack of a traditional tonal structure, the four sections are linked by a common reliance on C# as the main focal point within Bartok's dissonant style.

The Prima parte is essentially a development of a single musical idea which involves a rising fourth followed by a falling third. The germinal cell is presented in its simplest form at the end of the slow, introspective part. The Recapitulazione della prima parte is a highly condensed and radically altered restatement of the ideas presented in the opening section.

The Seconda parte is also based on a single germinal cell which is first introduced in the cello. The obvious relationship of this lively dance theme to folk music brings immediately to mind the scholarly studies made by Bartok of various music cultures. After the preliminary statement, the theme is given a new rhythmic framework before being transformed and employed as the basis for a number of contrapuntal variations. The percussive use of the instruments and the frequent changes of meter emphasize the strongly rhythmic aspect of the Seconda parte. In the Coda these ideas are driven to an aggressive conclusion.

I N T E R M I S S I O N

String Quartet, op 132 in A minor

Beethoven

Assai sostenuto - Allegro

Allegro ma non tanto

Molto adagio - Andante

Alla marcia, assai vivace

Allegro appassionato

In the late quartets written during the last few years of his life, Ludvig van Beethoven (1770-1827) moved far away from the classical patterns established by Haydn and Mozart. Very few of his contemporaries were able to understand and appreciate the late works for the novelty of conception appeared to be insurmountable. Beethoven, having with-

drawn into a soundless world, evolved a unique style which defies imitation.

The String Quartet, op 132 is a work of substantial length which is divided into five movements. The first movement opens with an eight-bar slow introduction based on a simple four note figure. This meditative passage builds from a pianissimo entry in the cello to the fort of the Allegro. The main thematic material of the sonata, typified by impulsive dotted rhythms, exudes romantic yearnings. In contrast the secondary themes are distinguished by a light lyricism in F major. The development and juxtaposition of passionate and tender moments stimulates much interest in the movement.

The second movement, a scherzo marked Allegro ma non tanto, retains a sense of moderation and grace. The dance-like melodies are passed from voice to voice in a charming dialogue. Through the alternation of A major and the tonic minor, Beethoven is able to simply change the colour in the various sections. The texture of the trio is substantially different in that a single melodic line dominates by moving ceaselessly over the accompanying figures. The sustained A is reminiscent of a drone in pastoral dances.

A severe illness which struck Beethoven in the spring of 1825 was the inspiration for the slow movement. It is comprised of two contrasting sections which alternate and are varied at each restatement. The first subtitled "Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Divinity by a Convalescent in the Lydian Mode", is chorale-like in nature. The sustained tones of the theme are related to the Gregorian chant Veni Creator, Spiritus. The second section is more vigorous, thus suggesting his recovery and renewed joy in living. Of particular interest in the subsequent variations is the intensely polyphonic nature of his writing - each voice becomes strikingly independent, especially in the Andante passages.

The fourth movement is an exuberant march in A major which revels in lusty dotted rhythms and sprightly melodies. The march is linked to the Allegro appassionato through an intense recitative for the first violin. The finale is a passionate rondo in A minor. Gradually the movement grows from the soft opening to the animated brilliance of the concluding Presto in A major. (Notes by W.Bowen).

Next Event: Thursday, January 29, 1976 - JUDY LOMAN, Harp, 8:30 p.m.

Next Orford String Quartet Concert - Sunday February 8, 1976, 3 p.m.